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BOOKS

FABLES AND SYMBOLS

TRUTH AND HUMOR

— FOR —

OLD AND YOUNG

— BY —

CLÉMENTCE DE LA BAERE

1905

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FABLES AND SYMBOLS

PREFACE.

I ask the indulgence of the public on the following fables, for I am aware that they are far from being perfect. I did the best I could. Born in France I could not speak English when I came to sunny California where I have since written these, and it is with reluctance that I venture their publication.

Fable-lore with its cheering flashes of wit and humor has ever enlivened the leisure hours of man, while symbols and parables whose interpretations are as varied as they are fathomless, stimulate the observation of the thinking minds and often suggest truths that will produce everlasting impressions.

He who loves nature and has a universal compassion for man and beast vibrates with the pulsations of the planet, lives in two worlds, enjoys and acts upon two spheres, for manifold are the layers of human consciousness and endless its ramifications.

CLÉMENCE DE LA BAERE.

TRUTH AND HUMOR



THE FROG AND THE BIRD.

A frog was lazily squatting on the bank of a muddy pond when a little bird approached and after bathing in the dew and breakfasting on the tiny insects from a budding sweet briar, settled down on a twig and sang a song. The song was so melodious and so tenderly pathetic that it fascinated a frog which had been observing it from below. He was a licentious materialistic frog and like all of his kind, conceited. He did not realize the enormous distance between the graceful songster and himself, and began to wink and to attract the attention of the little musician by making noises and spattering in the mud. It was all in vain though, for the songster never looked down but looked steadily upward to the sun.

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Impudence and conceit are close companions. The frog determined to croak a love song that should be louder than the bird's melodies. He thus declared the intensity of his passion, the charms of living in a muddy pool and hopping in turbid waters. He offered to teach the bird how to croak if it would come down and consent to remain below.

The love of a frog could not tempt one predestined to soar through the azure skies, but true to the refinement of its nature, after having listened, the bird replied courteously.

"I could not soil my feet in that mire, but if your feelings for me are as you say, Sir, you may come up to me and we will fly and sing together."

The frog hid in the mud and stopped croaking—for a while.



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ENGLAND AND IRELAND.

England and Ireland had slowly emerged from chaos, quite slowly indeed, and were yet at that barbarous state where human creatures ignore all brotherhood. As a result they were continually warring together, instead of loving one another—as they do today.

Both nations were pious, in their way, the English being Protestant, and the Irish being Catholic, each prayed fervently before every battle, that it might have the victory, and destroy and annihilate the enemy and forever rejoice over the murders committed.

We should not lay this up against them, for it all happened so long ago. Besides, those wretched savages did not possess the blessed civilization upon which we pride ourselves today, and which causes us all to live in perfect harmony and to love one another all over the planet.

But we must stick to our story for it is a bad one. Another battle was to take place and it threatened to be fiercer than any that had preceded. Men's heads were swelling with martial energy like cakes on a hot griddle.

Both nations went upon their knees praying the Lord with increased ardor that they might destroy and annihilate their mortal enemies, cover themselves with laurels and glory and vowing to return thanks and sing songs of praise.

The Lord, who always grants earnest prayers, yielded to the demands of both sides.

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The English you must know were superior in number, but the Irish had St. Patrick as patron saint, which equalized the forces.

When all was ready they shook their fists at each other and began fighting. In the twinkling of an eye not a single head remained upon its shoulders, but all were rolling helter skelter upon the battlefield, still showing their teeth in bitter defiance.

Saint Patrick's kind heart was moved with pity on seeing all the witty heads of his beloved Paddies thus scattered about.

This double victory is but a mournful defeat after all, thought he, and he begged the Lord that he might restore them all to life.

"So you may," replied the good Lord, "but do you not see that they would then fight with renewed vengeance."

"That is true," replied Saint Patrick sadly, but after a



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moment's reflection an idea struck him, and he proposed that they should transfer the heads of the Irish to the shoulders of the English and vice versa.

"So you may," replied the good Lord.

The dead arose. Each was now a part of the other. There was no more desire for murderous or selfish prayers, and for a period the golden age was realized by the two nations. But the relentless wheel of time has removed that blessed state, which is expected to return soon now on its new cycle.



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ENVY.

Once upon a time a beautiful Bird of Paradise was imported from India and exhibited in a town where it received the greatest admiration.

When the native animals heard of this they resented it as an intrusion upon their privileges and decided to call in a body upon the stranger so as to find out what all this ado was about.

They approached the delicate foreigner informally and frowned at its graceful motions, sylph-like figure and display of tropical feathers.

The illwill which had brought them spurred them on, and as their jealous envy could find no fault they resorted to spite and sarcasm—ready weapons of the incompetent.

“Can you mew?” said the cat.

“Can you quack?” said the duck.

“Can you crow?” said the rooster

“Can you bleat?” said the goat.

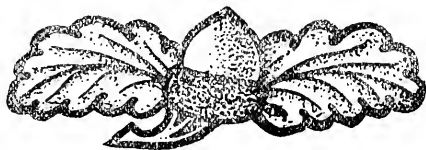
“Can you bray?” said the donkey.

“Can you croak?” said the frog.

“What is all that?” politely inquired the bright bird.

“Ha! Ha! Ha! He does not know anything! Come let us go; we do not want to associate with a fool.”

On their way home they accused the fine foreigner of all the ugly feelings which were in their own hearts.



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A TYRANNICAL KING.

In bygone days there once was a cruel, tyrannical king, who, from selfish sordidness taxed his subjects so heavily that it marred all the joys of their lives. Their anxious minds had grown indifferent to the fair beauties of nature. In poverty and distress, ill fed, ill clothed and ill lodged, they had no heart, even for love. Few of them married, not feeling equal to providing for a family.

This oppressive king, who for many years had had a childless queen, was at last presented by her with a son and heir to the throne.

The happy event was celebrated by a grand jubilee in the royal palace, but it was of short duration, for the rumor soon spread that the young prince was so feeble that he was not expected to live.

In his fear and desperation the king sent for all the doctors of the land. They examined the emaciated little form, looked dismal, but dared not speak.

The wizard's arts were then put under contribution with the same result.

The king offered his private favors, the half of his kingdom and treasury to the man who could heal his son, but all was in vain.

At last there came a man nobody knew whence, who looked as old as time. He had but three hairs on his head. The colors of the rainbow radiated from his luminous eyes, and caused the king to tremble when their gaze was turned upon him.

In a modulated rythmical tone, which sounded more like breath than speech, the sage addressed the king as follows:

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"If your majesty could procure me what is needed I could then heal your son."

"I swear upon my crown that you shall have it!" answered the king.

"Make haste and state what it is."

But the good sage shook his head despondently, saying:

"I greatly fear that it cannot be found within your Majesty's kingdom. It is a mattress made of the hair of healthy new born infants, for the sick prince to sleep upon."

"Is that all?" exclaimed the king, "you shall have it! You shall have it at once."

But the sage looked doubtful and sad.

Immediately the king gave orders that every infant within his domain should be shorn, yea, shorn to the scalp that his son might live.

The command was obeyed, but as his reign had been one of tyranny and oppression his people were unhappy, unhealthy and weak. If perchance a poor babe was born it was bald, wrinkled and aged-looking. It whined and cried over the miseries of this world.

Under these adverse circumstances the king's emissaries could gather, but a few pinches of clippings, and when they made their reports the king flew into a rage of passion. Then looking upon the wasted form of his suffering child, his fatherly heart gave way to grief. He dropped at the feet of the sage and humiliating himself implored his advice in this cruel emergency.

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"Majesty," replied the sage, "do you realize that every parent within your kingdom is enduring the same torture of heart which you are now undergoing yourself? That they suffer besides for the necessities of life and through fear of your exactions. Do you realize that your ungracious reign has dispirited them by depriving them even of a fair share of the profits which their diligent toil has acquired for your support?"

"I had not thought of all that, but what can now be done to save the life of my child?" replied the selfish monarch.

The sage replied: "Put together the little hair that has been gathered, and make of it a small pillow, were it but an inch large; then place it under the right ear of the prince. Even this little may preserve the breath of life within him until more hair can be found. Then send immediately succor and comfort to all the pregnant mothers of the land. Procure to the fathers the means of providing for their families and making their wives hopeful and happy. Acquaint yourself with the condition of your subjects, supply their needs by well ordained regulations, and be warned that it



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behooves him who rules, were it only over one man, to be a father to that man. Let the good will of the throne radiate throughout the kingdom, and as vibrations move in a circle, your own will return to you freighted with the blessings of your subjects. Endow the marriageable young maidens, and so many nuptials your majesty may smile upon, so many will shortly contribute to fill the prince's mattress and restore him to health and life."

"If your majesty follows my advice faithfully for three years the mattress will then be completed and I shall add my own three hairs which will impart a threefold understanding of many things. When the prince shall be three times seven years he will be your elder in wisdom. You will do well to resign the state affairs unto his hands then, and thus secure time for yourself to think about the unnecessary sufferings and hardships you have inflicted upon others, and atone for them as you may ere you go to your grave."



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A GOOD FOWL.

A luxury-loving man was examining his poultry yard to select the fowl with which he desired to regale himself at the coming holiday.

A crowing capering red cock soon attracted his attention. He pointed him out to his servant and said:

"There will be a good morsel, fatten him."

Afterward, with an epicurean expectation he went to look at the fowl every day, and once he took the notion of asking whether he was happy in his cage.

Trembling with fear, the feather-robed brave thought that if he made the shadow of a complaint it would only hasten the day of his execution, replied:

"Honored master, how could I be anything but happy receiving as I do so many tokens of your bounty."

This answer pleased the master, who said contentedly:

"He is a good fowl." Then smacking his lips he ordered: "Kill him today!"

It does not always protect one to try and please certain masters.



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ONE-OF-THEM.

"Darwin's theory about worms being inferior creatures is all wrong," said One-of-them.

"We do not break our bones into fragments like quadrupeds and bipeds, and if it is the devil who invented doctors 'tis clear that he has no power over us, for we alone can discountenance doctor's crafts.

"If we happen to be mutilated, every piece of us reconstructs and completes itself. But pray, who has ever seen a man walking without a head? Well, a physical head, at least. Therefore 'tis clear, 'tis very clear from my point of view that we are their superiors."

A bird soaring in the skies above replied:

"And as long as you occupy the point of view of One-of-them, dearie, thus it will appear to you, for all creatures are boasting over their advantages from their own point of view."



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A NURSE.

Sitting by a pink-lined cradle, her eyes moist with sympathy and compassion, a nurse was looking at the new-born soul that had been trusted into her care.

"How I love those frail-born little beings!" thought she. "They call out all the tenderness of my heart. I revere my profession and would resign it reluctantly even in Heaven." After a pause, "Nor can I see what I could do there, as there is no need of nurses, I suppose."

A gentle drowsiness stole upon her, a purple curtain was lifted and she saw a vision of another sphere. A white-robed One approached her and said:

"Here are the nurseries of new-born ideals. They are more delicate even than the flesh babes below. A foul breath will contaminate them. An ill-begotten zephyr will poison them, an erroneous suggestion will destroy them. In the future, if thou so desirest, thou mayest minister to these. They need loving watchfulness and devotion."

The nurse awoke with heart and mind moved to compassion and self-renunciation. She resolved to begin now to nurse and protect the high ideals of those around her.



THE VEIL.

A man died. He was called a good man upon earth, but earth's children do not know the meaning of their alphabet as you shall soon see.

On awakening to his new consciousness this man was blind as a bat, yet the light streamed around him.

His blindness confused his wits, of which he had much less than he had been credited with.

He called for his servants, his friends, all the dear ones he had left on earth, but all was dead silence.

Until his voice was exhausted he kept clamoring:

"Where am I? Where am I? Where in thunder am I?"

Generations passed,—ages passed,—and our good man was still crying out:

"Where am I? Where am I? Where in thunder am I? Must I remain here, unattended, until eternity is at an end? I will not have it!"

"Why complainest thou, friend? Thou art in Heaven," said a voice.

"I am in Heaven," replied the good man confounded. "But I can not see."



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"Verily," said the voice, "thou hast put a veil before thine eyes."

"I have put a veil before mine eyes," said the astonished man. "If that is the case, I want some one to remove it."

"That would not be lawful," said the voice, "thou must first recognize its existence, then thou must will it away through thought force."

"I WILL," said the good man, "with all the strenuousness of my being, I WILL that the veil be removed NOW."

"In that case I may inform thee of what it is made so that thou mayest know in which direction to act.

"Unkept resolutions, postponed good deeds, duties fulfilled to please others, good words spoken for mere effect, truths taught to others but left unpracticed, ostentation at the funerals of those who were neglected at their hour of need, donations to be effected after thy death."

"Oh! that I could let my friends on earth know this!" cried out the good man.

"They all know it, even as thou knewest it," replied the voice,—and again all was dead silence.



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NEW GENERATION.

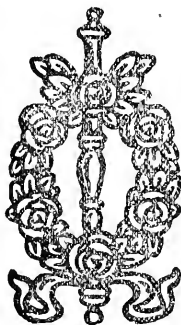
A hungry mouseling once found a green chestnut and tried long and hard to clear away the prickly burr.

An older mouse approached, he was of the advice-giving temperament, and suggested:

"Be patient, little one, and wait until it bursts open, then it will drop off."

"But I am hungry now," replied the New Generation.

To give advice is one thing, and to give assistance is another.



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IDLE TALK AND SILENT POWER.

"I," said the shadow, "I can play a thousand tricks upon mortals; I can delude them by countless projections and appearances, I can cause them to enter a lifelong pursuit of me, despoil themselves of all their real possessions and frantically attempt to seize the illusory phantoms of my creation. In fact this world is my sporting-ground, and I rule it according to my whim and fancy."

"O but I!" said the stream of water, "I travel playfully throughout the land bestowing my favors upon whatever posies my fancy chooses. Sometimes I take pleasure in devastation, run riot among those that displease me, or tear them up and root them out. Again I fertilize and irrigate, but whatever I do I choose my own way whether it be straight or crooked, for 'tis plain I own the land."

"Nay, nay," said the fog, "why all this prattle? when it is well known that I can prevent you from seeing even yourselves and knowing where you are. I can make the brightest eyes powerless. My very appearance causes consternation upon a battlefield and prevents the god Mars from recognizing his own. My supremacy upon land or ocean is unlimited and 'tis but justice that my accomplishment should take the precedence over your mediocrity."

The Sun came out, and in silent solemnity dried out the stream and dissipated the shadow and the fog.



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AN UNLUCKY NUMBER.

Once upon a time a good little hen hatched out thirteen trim chicks, pray notice the number, among which was a duckling, a duck's egg having been placed in the nest.

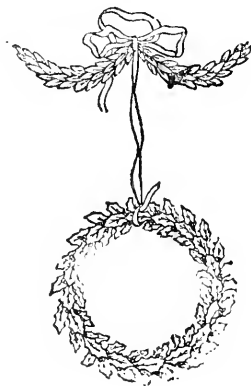
As a matter of course all the other chicks soon pecked at the duckling, just in the manner of men who peck at whomsoever differs from themselves.

The unfortunate duckling inquired why it should be so unkindly treated since it had done no harm.

"Thou art webfooted and wicked, besides thou art an unlucky number," retorted the chorus, while pecking at it with increased animosity.

The suffering victim waddled to the mother-hen for solace and protection.

She called her brood together, and used all the conciliatory eloquence her motherly heart could suggest in defense of her prosecuted one. She explained that they were



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all equally her children. That during the brooding period she had often watched their shells, which were all alike. "Nay," added she, "little webfoot was the largest."

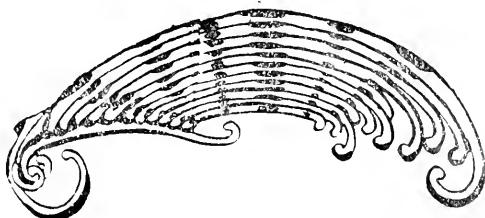
This but increased the ill feelings of the others, and as the poor martyr pleaded for mercy, recalling the mother's words, they replied:

"'Tis clear logic that if thou wert larger than we thou hast more capacity for evil, therefore away with thee, unlucky number, thou must die!" and intending to drown it they pursued it to the river's edge and drove it into the water.

Here little webfoot was astounded at his own gifts and swam across the river with easy grace, thanking fortune for his freedom.

The smaller chicks on this side could not see across the river and prided themselves upon having rid the world of an unlucky number.

The ill will of others is often the instrument that directs us to our own element for our greatest good.



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THE PROBLEM OF LIFE.

In gone-by times a man while searching to solve the problem of life had fretted away the hair from his head and the flesh from his bones. He was thin as a shadow, gloomy as a thunder cloud and bald as a coot. He finally secluded himself in an ancient tower which had become the abode of crows. There he worked himself up to such a degree of wretchedness that it startled and disturbed the crows and they inquired for the cause of his worriment. "I have determined," said the man, "to find the solution of the problem of life. To that effect I have traveled seven times around the world, consulted all the sages of the globe, invoked all the powers of earth, of nature and of heaven, but all in vain!"

The elder crow called granny was as old as time to say the least, and was highly venerated throughout crowdom.

She now commenced to flutter and limp about, to search and seek all throughout the tower in the manner of a woman who has lost her thimble, while crying out.

"Where is she? O where is she?"

"Where is who?" queried the man.

"Where is granny?"

"Ah! Ha! that is too good, why you are her," said the man.

"And you are the problem of life, sonny," retorted granny as she dropped one of her rigid feathers on the man's noddle to make a hole by which he might perceive the light within himself.

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GRIEVE NOT, BUT REJOICE.

Socrates had spent the afternoon discoursing in the Capitol, after which he went to the cemetery for recreation. On his way he found an old Pagan at the feet of the goddess Fortune, who was bitterly complaining against his destiny.

Socrates approached him and the following dialogue ensued:

Socrates: "Friend, what is the cause of thy grief?"

The Pagan: "O master! I have lost all my riches."

Socrates: "Of what did they consist then?"

The Pagan: "Of lands, houses, and estates."

Socrates: "Callest thou such things riches?"

The Pagan (surprised): "Verily, unless I call them a gift of the gods."

Socrates: "How didst thou come by them?"

The Pagan: "The gods gave them to me as a reward of my honest life, no doubt."

Socrates: "Friend, thy speech is inconsistent with reason. If it were a reward of thy merit it could not be a gift, and be it said among us the gods make no gifts; but in what way didst thou dispose of the riches while thou hadst them, pray?"

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"The Pagan: "I ministered them to the best of my ability and devoted all my time to them."

Socrates: "To please the gods or to please thyself?"

The Pagan: "What a strange question."

Socrates: "Direct and to the point."

The Pagan: "I fear I cannot very well answer."

Socrates: "Thou canst but darest not; but tell me further, what good didst thou do unto others with thy riches?"

The Pagan: "I was too much absorbed by the administration of my own affairs to take much concern in those of others."

Socrates: "Then thy riches which the gods had but entrusted unto thee proved a curse to thyself and others by thine own fault. Now that the gods have relieved thee of them so as not to involve thy selfish judgment any farther, and have placed them in better hands, thou are the gainer, and will now have time to attend to thy soul's concern. Therefore Grieve not but Rejoice over the loss of thy riches."

Material success often interferes with soul progression.





ENDOWMENTS SPRING FROM WITHIN.

It once happened that a baby was born to a pair of loving rustics, and although such an event is not of uncommon occurrence, yet the fond parents were greatly rejoiced.

After a long and loving enumeration of all its accomplishments the father proudly declared:

Many great men did not have as much to start with as this twelve-pounder of ours."

The wife fully admitted the verity of the fact, and added: "If we only lived in the time of the fairies so that they might endow our precious darling with their gifts."

Immediately a fragrant mist surrounded the cradle, from which emerged two handsome fairies, who said:

"Dear friends, we come to endow your child and will fill its head with the best of our gifts."

Then they produced a great variety of sweet smelling boxes and aromatic sachets, endeavoring to introduce the contents of them into the baby's head through all the available orifices, including the sutures of the skull. But they could not succeed in causing them to penetrate.

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The baby's head was already as plumb full as a spring turnip, and the fairies said to the father:

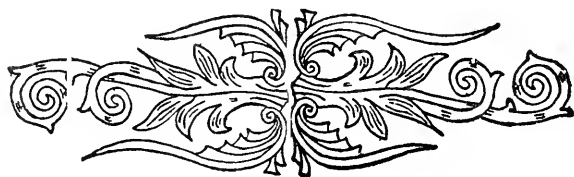
"It cannot be done from without, but if you will give us a saw, good friend, we will lay its head open and fill it from within."

A saw was immediately produced, and though the child kicked and squalled some instead of submitting quietly, its little head was laid open. On examination it was found that all the brain cells were already complete and nothing could be added.

Upon this the father indignantly cried out: "Ladies, make haste to repair our babe's little pate, and be gone, ye givers of gifts! You have caused us a world of trouble, and all for nothing."

"Not quite," replied the fairies, "we caused your baby to start kicking, an essential function in this world, and we also proved to you that when a mortal is born he is already provided with what is best for him."

Endowments are inherent, they spring from within.



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IT IS MINE.

A young calf staggering on its clumsy fours was making such awkward jumps and motions as to provoke the hilarity of the spectators. The mother-cow imagined they were stricken with admiration, since she considered her offspring as a gem of grace and perfection. Addressing the scoffers she said with a proud and happy smile:

“It is mine.”



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A POINT OF ATTRACTION.

Nature was so urging the growth of the most vigorous tree of a grove that it cried out in anguish:

“But why this haste. I am already the tallest of the grove, if I grow much higher I shall only be all the more a point of attraction for the lightning.”

“Yea,” says nature, “but I need just such points of attraction.”





A MUDDY CREST.

Because of his powerful crowing capacity a certain chanticleer imagined that he was qualified to reform featherdom. With drum and trumpet he declared his intentions, and the assumption of a dignified attitude, the resounding of a sonorous voice and the display of a bright coat of feathers soon attracted a bevy of admiring hens around the great luminary.

He flapped his wings with great decorum, sung and crowed in an endless variety of tunes and attitudes. Then he leaped into a plunge of eloquence sufficient to dazzle for life the rudimentary-brained chickens of the audience. But no sooner did they look the great orator in the face than they perceived that his crest, his ample commanding crest, was muddy.

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Alas! that this should be the case, for they were no longer affected by the eloquence of his exhortation. Their attention was completely absorbed by the the muddy crest, and at every pause of the speaker they whispered softly to one-another, "Too bad that his crest should be muddy."

The speech and the individual qualifications of the speaker were soon forgotten, but the fact of the muddy crest of the speaker passed unto posterity.

He who presumes to reform others should be unblemished.



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A JACKASS.

A fame-loving jackass was once informed that to stand well in society it behooved her to go to school. "I shall go," said she, but no sooner had she formed the resolution than the powers seemed to conspire against it.

There was a snail on the path.

The weather was threatening.

The north wind was blowing.

The fragrance of the wild thyme along the road was unbearable.

The continuous strain of the singing birds was a nuisance.

The bright-dotted butterflies fluttering in the sunshine injured her eyesight.

At last, one day she had almost reached school when, in a barren spot was a patch of thistles wafted by the wind. This to our jackass represented all the music of the spheres. She could now well afford to say fie! to whoever mentioned dainty morsels. Had she not thistles? Not only was school dispensed with but the very resolution was dismissed.

Later when in the company of those that had received school training Dame Jackass never failed to make her point by saying:

"Yes, yes, that is so, I remember having heard it when I used to go to school." But all she knew was how to bray for she had never reached school.



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REYNARD AGAIN.

In a certain district where many nocturnal depredations had taken place, an old fox had at last been caught, and under such incriminating and aggravating circumstances that he was immediately placed upon trial before a jury. However, like all great criminals, an opportunity was given him to present his defense.

So, bowing to the court he said: "Your Honor," then turning to the jury he added, "and gentlemen of the jury, it is true that appearances are not in my favor, but, when I shall have proved to you the innocence of my motives, I am convinced that the sense of justice which animates gentlemen of such high intelligence will acquit me at once of the charges made against me. You will thus entitle yourselves to the warmest effusions of my grateful heart, for as a legitimate son of my father I am not an evil doer but one who tries to correct and reform others, just the same as does your Honor.

"My first responsible act was to catch a few perverse birds which caroled around the holy church to disturb the service. It also happened that I saw a small brained lamb-

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kin gorging itself so immoderately upon the tender green grass that I feared there would not be enough left for the others, and therefore considered it a kindness to them to swallow the little glutton.

"On another occasion I found a young fawn so totally devoid of sense as to drink from a miry muddy pond, and to save it from being injured therefrom I killed it before injury could come.

"At another time, I observed a shy rabbit so diffident in courage and character that I deemed it unfit to live; for deteriorated beings ought never to propagate, and in my love of doing good I rid the world of the worthless thing. Again an obtrusive hare was frolicking on a road where some hunters were desirous of passing and I quickly removed it out of their way.

"One day when I happened, accidentally, to be passing a chicken-yard I heard some hens using uncivil language with regard to myself, and to prevent the repetition of such a distasteful occurrence, I removed them during the night.

"When I see goslings and ducklings trouble the water which others need to drink I consider it only right to see to it that they shall not do it again. And when I took that sheep yesterday it was to save it from an execrable lion lurking in the woods near by.

FABLES AND SYMBOLS

"Last night I discovered a vile, crafty skunk in quest of prey, and knowing that a brood of tender ducklings was within his reach I took charge of them myself to save them from the villain's maw.

"Neither can it be laid up against me if nature has so ordained it that the foes of my race should be edible; nor should I be blamed for loving meat, especially poultry—the same as does your Honor, and you, gentlemen of the jury, who, I hope are now convinced by what I have said that I live not to do evil, but, to prevent and punish it in others.

"Therefore like yourselves also I deserve reward, not punishment."

The jury retired to deliberate, and finally brought in the following verdict:

"That inasmuch as it was true that Reynard deserves to be rewarded for the pains he had taken, he should therefore be presented by the court with a new rope with which to be immediately hanged to the nearest tree. Further, that his carcass should be distributed among the orphans of his victims, as they would presumably like him better without his hide; and that his skin should be allotted to his Honor in payment of his fee."





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